

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2594

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: ANOTHER ROW IN THE LABOR PARTY

SUMMARY - ROY JENKINS HAS TOUCHED OFF ANOTHER ROW IN THE LABOR PARTY WITH AN APPEAL TO THE PARTY TO SEEK TO CAPTURE THE MODERATE MIDDLE GROUND IN BRITISH POLITICS. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE ROAD TO ELECTORAL SUCCESS LIES LEFT OR RIGHT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MATTER OF PROFOUND DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, AND THIS CURRENT DISPUTE IS HARDLY LIKELY TO END MORE CONCLUSIVELY THAN ITS MANY PREDECESSORS. UNHAPPILY FOR JENKINS, HOWEVER, HIS SPEECH MAY PROVE, IN PART AT LEAST, SELF-DEFEATING.
END SUMMARY

1. LEADING MEMBERS OF THE LABOR PARTY ARE SQUABBLING IN PUBLIC AGAIN. THIS LATEST ROW WAS SPARKED OFF BY A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAJOR SPEECH DELIVERED BY ROY JENKINS ON JULY 26. IN IT

HE APPEALED TO THE LABOR PARTY TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO WIN OVER PROGRESSIVE, MODERATE VOTERS. THEIR VIEWS, HE SAID, WERE SHARED BY MANY LABOR MPS, BUT TO GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THESE VOTERS, IT WAS NECESSARY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT SUCH MPS HAD "AN ADEQUATE INFLUENCE UPON THE OUTLOOK AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF THE PARTY."

2. FOR THE LABOR PARTY "TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION IN THE MAIN STREAM OF PUBLIC OPINION", JENKINS ASSERTED, IT HAD TO MAKE CRYSTAL CLEAR TO THE ELECTORATE ITS COMMITMENT TO THE RULE OF LAW, ITS INTENTION TO KEEP BRITAIN FULLY PART OF THE WESTERN COMMUNITY OF NATIONS, ITS READINESS TO LIVE WITH A MIXED ECONOMY THAT INCLUDED A HEALTHY, VIGOROUS, AND PROFITABLE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND ITS WILLINGNESS TO MAKE SACRIFICES, BOTH OF DOGMA AND MATERIALISM, TO BRING INFLATION UNDER CONTROL.

3. THE SPEECH RECEIVED PROMINENT AND SYMPATHETIC COVERAGE IN THE QUALITY PRESS. A NUMBER OF PROMINENT LEFT-WINGERS INCLUDING IAN MUKARDO, CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY, AND ERIC HEFFER, MINISTER OF STATE UNDER TONY BENN, WERE QUICK TO CHASTISE JENKINS FOR BEING "DIVISIVE", AND TWO OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE CABINET, SHIRLEY WILLIAMS AND REG PRENTICE, CAME TO HIS DEFENSE AND ENDORSED HIS VIEWS. IT ALL MAKES GOOD COPY, BUT WILSON IS WIDELY EXPECTED TO CALL A HALT TO THE FEUDING WHEN HE MEETS WITH LABOR MPS TOMORROW (JULY 30) TO DELIVER AN END OF SESSION REPORT.

4. COMMENT - THE FRUSTRATION OF RIGHT WINGERS IN THE LABOR PARTY IS UNDERSTANDABLE. EVER SINCE 1970, THE DOMINANT TONE AND DIRECTION OF PARTY POLICIES HAVE BEEN SET BY THE LEFT. NONETHELESS, THE WISDOM OF JENKINS' SPEECH IS OPEN TO QUESTION. BY GOING PUBLIC WITH HIS APPEAL, HE HAS LEFT HIMSELF VULNERABLE TO THE CHARGE OF STIRRING UP A FIGHT AT A TIME WHEN THE PARTY SHOULD BE DRAWING TOGETHER TO FACE A GENERAL ELECTION. MORE SERIOUSLY, HE HAS REINFORCED THE POPULAR IMPRESSION THAT THE LABOR PARTY IS IN FACT CONTROLLED BY ITS LEFT WING -- A PROPOSITION THAT IS AT LEAST ARGUABLE -- AND BY DOING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SO HAS RUN THE RISK OF ALIENATING THOSE VERY VOTERS, THE UNCOMMITTED MODERATES, WHOM HE IS OSTENSIBLY SEEKING TO ATTRACT.

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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